State of the Communication Lab:
Spring 2013

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Overview

This report captures the impact of the Communication Department’s Communication Lab for the Fall 2012 semester at Ohlone College. This semester we demonstrated continued growth, excellence and significant improvement of the Communication Lab.

Our primary goal of the Communication Lab is to increase ethical oral communication competence as identified by the Title V, GE Pattern.

All students enrolled in SPCH 101-Public Speaking received supervised tutoring in the Communication Lab. Each student is required to complete a total of 16 hours of lab per semester. In the Fall 2012 semester we had a total of 420 Public Speaking students, who attended the lab for approximately 6,500 hours of supervised tutoring. For the Spring 2013 semester our enrollment is up to 600 Public Speaking students. We project a total of over 9,000 hours of supervised tutoring in our lab.

Listed below are a few highlights from the report:

• Summary of results from 141 students satisfaction surveys illustrating successful (quantitative and qualitative) experiences:
  o Overwhelmingly, the students ranked the Communication Lab as a valuable service provided by the college
  o The students stated that the Communication Lab increased confidence and improved grades on speech assignments and that they would indeed recommend the Communication Lab to fellow Ohlone College students
  o Qualitative comments directly from students about their positive experiences in the Communication Lab

• Areas of improvement: additional seating, improved WiFi, additional computers for student use

• National recognition in the Fall 2012 National Association of Communication Centers (NACC) newsletter

• Goals for the Communication Lab
Background

In 2006, Dean Mikelyn Stacey gave the Communication department its first Speech Lab in Hyman Hall 216. She also helped develop our tutor training class (SPCH 190) and curriculum to staff and fund the lab. Prior to 2006, the Speech Lab was a small resource center on the fourth floor of the library. Professors Kay Harrison and Maggie Morrison wrote a Partnership for Excellence Grant in the 1990’s for a Speech Lab. In 2011, we published a Communication Lab manual which includes required lab curriculum for the Speech 101 Public Speaking course. This manual has provided continual funding for supplies and equipment for our lab. By Fall 2012, the lab had outgrown Hyman Hall 216, and Vice President Dr. Jim Wright allowed the lab to relocate to room 2301.

Teachers

In the past, there was one paid instructor for the Communication Lab. Currently, there are five paid instructors working at their designated Ohlone College lab rate between two and ten hours per week. There is also one paid student intern who works twenty hours per week to supervise the lab space. In the future, the department would like to double the number of instructors paid to work in the lab.

Tutors

The bulk of the face-to-face interactions of our 600 Public Speaking students come from the staff of 30-37 student tutors. Tutors are students enrolled in the SPCH 190 A, B, or C course. This course is a variable unit class that has a combination of lecture and lab components. All students participate in the tutor training (lecture) portion of this class. The number of hours worked by each individual student comprises the lab component. Tutors are required to have either completed or be concurrently enrolled in SPCH 101, Public Speaking. Successful completion of the SPCH 190 course also requires an instructor evaluation of their work during their tutoring hours.

Communication Lab: Semester Goals for Fall 2012

Goal 1: Give every Public Speaking student a Lab Tour.

The goal was achieved. The department has asked every instructor to bring his/her class into the Communication Lab in the beginning of the semester for a Lab Tour, with instructors and tutors on duty assisting.

In the Fall 2012 semester we administered Communication Lab satisfaction surveys to six of the fifteen sections to SPCH 101 Public Speaking. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected on the students’ experience. Of the 141 Public Speaking students surveyed, 138 received a lab tour during the semester.
Goal 2: Enhance oral communication competence for our Public Speaking students (i.e. informative, persuasive and impromptu presentations, research and outlining, creation and use of visual aids).

This goal was achieved. According to the student satisfaction survey, results showed an average response of 4.12 out of 5 in terms of improvement of confidence; and a 4.09 out of 5 in terms of improving students’ grades on speeches and oral communication assignments.

As identified in the departmental Program Review, this goal is a primary course and program assessment goal.

Goal 3: Train lab tutors in a professional manner and ensure that they are confident and competent to assist students.

The goal was achieved. According to the student satisfaction survey, results showed an average response of 4.2 out of 5 regarding the professionalism of tutors and their help on speech assignments and lab activities.

A more structured tutor-training program has been developed both in person and through Blackboard. Program training sessions include outlining, critiquing student speeches and providing constructive feedback, thesis writing, introductions and conclusions, visual aids, communication apprehension and informative and persuasive speaking. The more structured tutor training program has increased the professionalism and quality of lab tutors.

In the future, the department would like to publish a tutor-training manual for student tutors to utilize in the Communication Lab.

Goal 4: Create a social network page so that students can connect on a personal level and access information about the lab at ease.

The goal was achieved. A Facebook page was created and was used as a learning and networking resource:

https://www.facebook.com/OhloneCommLab

Through the Facebook page, student intern, Jason Tang developed this project for the department. He asked students trivia questions regarding Public Speaking and offered extra credit to those who can answer the questions correctly.

One of those questions was, “What component do you need to have in a conclusion of a great speech?”

Here are a few of the students’ responses:

“Summary of Main Points, Concluding Remark and Restating of the Thesis.”
“It depends on the type of speech, but generally you need to 1. Review your thesis 2. Summarize your main points 3. Relate back to your attention getter/intro. Other speeches, such as persuasive speeches, usually need a call to action/close with impact.”

“You need to restate the thesis, review the speech, and close with impact”

“You need to start off by transitioning into the conclusion. Then you need to review your main points, connect with the audience, and finally close with impact and a call for action.”

“You need to review the main points of the speech, restate the thesis, connect with the audience, and close with impact by relating back to the intro or by giving an action to take.”

“A conclusion needs to have a review, to be able to connect with the audience, and to be able to close with an impact statement.”

“You need to summarize what you just explained, restate the thesis, and close with an impact.”

**Goal 5: Acquire student feedback about their experiences using the Communication Lab.**

At the end of the semester, students from five randomly chosen sections of Public Speaking were asked to fill out a response survey.

The following table displays the survey items and the average of the student responses to the survey; a Likert scale was used: (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Neutral/Average, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly Disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Averages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Communication lab provided a valuable service for me.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The lab was open at convenient times for my schedule.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I received a lab tour.</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>4. The lab tour successfully oriented me to the Communication Lab.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The tutors offered help on my speech assignments and lab activities.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. The tutors were trained and able to offer general public.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The lab instructor was available when I needed him or her.</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The technology I needed (wifi, computers, printer, projectors, etc.) was available when I needed.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. There were enough speaking spaces to practice my speech.</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. After attending the Communication Lab my confidence improved in the SPCH101 course.</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The assistance I received at the Communication Lab helped me to achieve a better grade on my assignment.</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I would recommend attending the Communication Lab to another student.</td>
<td>4.34</td>
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Many students included qualitative comments on the survey. Here is what they wrote about the Communication Lab:

Comments about Instructors:
“My experience in the Comm Lab was lovely; I felt it really did help me. Most of the nerves I had to present went away after presenting in front of Kristine. She was very kind and seemed very interested in what I was saying, which is to me a very good audience. Having a good audience who seems engaged makes presenting so much easier.”

“The tutors were very helpful and Brenda really helped to make the lab an enjoyable place to learn.”

Comments about Tutors:
“I had a positive experience visiting the communications lab. Tyree, the tutor that evaluated my practice speech, was incredibly helpful. Her friendly disposition and display of interest made me feel at ease. She was constructive in her criticism and helped point out areas where I could improve. I found the communications lab to be a valuable tool that I will definitely consider for future presentations.”

“My experience in the Comm. Lab was very nice and helpful. Right when I walked in, I was assisted with tutors. The tutors are very welcoming and approachable. They sit down and really listen to what you’re saying. They helped by going over the strong and weak areas in my presenting strategy. My weaknesses were brought to my attention so I worked on them before my presentation. I didn’t run into these weaknesses when I presented in class, which was great. Going to the lab really improved my presentation method.”

“Eric was the speech tutor that assisted me with my speech. He was extremely supportive and was a pleasure to meet. Thankfully, I didn’t have too many things that were of concern. Practicing my speech with the tutor really gave me the extra confidence that I needed to get through my first solo speech.”

“I liked the communication lab. I especially liked my tutor, Sean. He helped me a lot with the organization(layout) of my speech, my highlights, and my nerves. He was kind and warm, which put me at ease. He didn’t judge me, he listened open mindfully and gave helpful tips.”

“My experience in the comm. Lab was wonderful, my tutor Amanda was very helpful, gave a lot of great feedback on what I should work on and what I could add to make my presentation better; really listened to what I had to say. Overall the comm. Lab really helped, I could definitely see myself coming back.”

“Tutors are really NICE and helpful.”

“It was nice to be able to get work done on my breaks in between classes. Time added up quick. Tutors are really nice especially between 4-6 on Thursdays.”
“I was really skeptical, nervous, and intimidated by the students; but they really made me feel comfortable.”

“Tutors like Carmen helped me gain confidence and they provided good feedback.”

“Jason and Philip are excellent lab tutors, they helped me with my speeches and were friendly.”

“The assistants were really encouraging and nice, and they always give positive feedback.”

“Eric, Julie, and Jason are amazing; they are always so helpful.”

Comments on Confidence Boosting:
“The Comm lab helped me a lot even though I didn’t believe it would help but it really did.

“My experience in the Comm Lab was incredible. I felt more confident and prepared after going to the Lab. The assistant was very helpful. She gave me advices that can help me improve my presentation. In other words, it’s a perfect way to get yourself ready for your final speech.”

“In the Communication Lab, I was really scared. For example, for the first 5 minutes, I was concerned that whether I should go to an assistance or not; however, I end up going to an assistance. The assistance was a really nice lady and helped me a lot. Although, I was really nervous, she made me do the speech twice and told me to calm myself. The practice in the Communication Lab truly helped me improve my nervousness and built my confidence.”

“It was a great experience and it increased my confidence.”

Additional Comments:
“I am happy with the new lab and recommend all speech and comm. students to visit the lab.”

“It is the best place to practice a speech.”

“This really helped me… and work at my chance getting a better grade.”

“It’s great to have computers, to do research, and to be able to print.”

“The lab is very nice and a convenient space to work on speeches.”

“The lab is a good space to practice and gives you more confidence to speak in front of the class.”

“I went to the lab and everyone is super friendly and eager to help.”

Goal 6: Collaborate with the Librarians to ensure that the Ohlone College GE Information Competency requirement is met successfully for all SPCH 101 students.

All sections of SPCH 101 were required to conduct a library orientation with one of the Ohlone College Librarians. The Librarians also wrote and approved the research section of the lab
manual, which is required for all students to successfully complete the course. Due to the growing number of SPCH 101 sections and the decreasing number of librarians, one future goal is to create a library orientation unit for our online lab component in Blackboard. Required Ohlone College program assessment materials for Information Competency have led to a recommendation from the Librarians to increase the number of required library sources for informative and persuasive speeches (please see our Program Review for more details).

**Goal 7: Acquire resources to meet student needs**

The department recognizes that there will always be an ongoing need for resources to support student learning in the lab. As identified in these student comments taken from the surveys, students would like more seating, Wi-Fi access, and computers.

“Every time I went to the lab all of the seats were taken.”

“Wi-Fi was unreliable. Sometimes it worked and other times it was overloaded.”

“I don’t have my own laptop, so I wish there were more computers.”

**National Recognition**

The Ohlone College Communication Lab has been featured twice in the bi-annual National Association of Communication Centers Newsletter. Please see this link to the national website:


**Future Direction for the Communication Lab:**

- Secure a new, state-of-the-art, multimedia equipped lab in the new Learning Resource Center funded by Measure G. This space should include collaborative workspaces, private, sound-proof taping suites, and ample seating and Wi-Fi for 600 plus students a semester.
- Obtain National Certification from National Association of Communication Centers (NACC) for our Lab and Tutor Training Program.
- Secure an annual budget for staff, student tutors, and supplies.
- Hire a full-time faculty member that receives a portion of his/her load to direct and coordinate the lab.

Thank you to the entire Ohlone College community for its support in making the Communication Lab a successful resource for student learning!